



Speech By  
**Brent Mickelberg**

**MEMBER FOR BUDERIM**


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Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

**SUMMARY OFFENCES (PREVENTION OF KNIFE CRIME) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Resumed from 13 February (see p. 112), on motion of Mr Ryan—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (11.44 am), continuing: While the intent of this bill is welcomed, unfortunately it is too little too late from this government. Knife crime is already out of control. While stopping the sale of dangerous weapons to minors makes a lot of sense, it is not the fix to Queensland's escalating youth crime crisis that all Queenslanders are calling out for. Stakeholders have been calling for action in relation to the buying and selling of knives for some time, so it is good that this ban is being implemented. As is the usual case with this Labor government—this tired, third-term Labor government—it is not being rolled out with any thought given to those it impacts. In this case I am talking about small and family businesses right across Queensland that are going to bear the brunt of this legislation.

I note the reservations expressed by the Queensland Small Business Commissioner, who has concerns about the time and the financial impacts on business retailers. I would like to thank Dominique Lamb, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner, for her submission to the committee inquiry in relation to the bill. I am out each and every day listening to small business owners and their staff. One of the biggest issues they raise with me is a desire for the government to address red tape and the burden that it has on them. Even though this legislation is another step in removing knives from the hands of young offenders, we do need to consider the impact on business—in particular, small and family business—and ensure the government addresses ways to make this rollout easier on them.

For starters, the first-offence penalty for selling a controlled item to a minor is considerable. Our small and family businesses need to be educated and should be allowed a grace period first, before being slapped with a fine of more than \$21,000. Those opposite may not be aware, but our struggling small businesses just do not have a spare 20 grand in their back pocket. They need that money just to keep the lights on, especially with the soaring cost of electricity right across Queensland.

Speaking of money that they do not have, the new provisions also impose secure storage requirements for sellers. Businesses do need to be accountable, but we cannot just shift the responsibility onto them. These operational obligations are tough on small and family businesses. Many will feel the need to install CCTV as a way of providing evidence that they have followed the rules as well. They simply cannot absorb these costs.

The government must provide more guidance to small and family businesses and for retailers to receive warnings before they are being hit with such a large fine, particularly early on in this rollout. The minister's amendment around guidance does not offer much guidance. Simple information around how long businesses have to achieve these requirements should not be a secret.

Big businesses like Coles, Woolies, BCF and the like can comply with increased regulation. In fact, in many cases big businesses like the ones I mentioned like more regulation because it acts as a barrier to entry for other competitors. The businesses that wear the impact of increased regulation are small and family businesses. Unfortunately, though, Labor likes big business because big business likes the unions. However, it is small and family businesses that are the backbone of our community. It is the small and family businesses that sponsor the local footy club and provide sausages for the Bunnings sausage sizzle. Labor continues to wage war on small and family businesses. Even in their latest round of grants they ignored small and family businesses. Queensland small and family businesses deserve better. This legislation ignores the challenges that small businesses face, and that is because Labor do not understand small businesses.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Labor do not understand small businesses. How many of those opposite have actually worked in or run a small business? Not many compared to this side.

**Mr Smith** interjected.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Come on, mate. The Queensland Council of Unions is not a small business; it is organised crime at its best.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Order, members! The member for Buderim and the member for Bundaberg and others up in that corner will cease their quarrelling across the chamber. You might have the call, member for Buderim, but put your comments through the chair.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Thank you for your guidance, Deputy Speaker. Knife crime has to stop. We cannot sit by and watch young thugs stabbing and slashing innocent people—people who are just going about their lives—let alone attacking one another. I have four young children. It is not the kind of Queensland that I want my children to grow up in. I am sure every Queenslander would agree with that sentiment. My wife and I can guide our children to make good choices, but it is scary to think that we cannot always protect them from others, especially—and I shudder to think—those who may be armed with a knife, machete or axe.

My message today is that we cannot forget small business. Getting tough on small business is not getting tough on youth crime.

**Mr Purdie:** That's a great line.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** It is a great line, member for Ninderry. Close to home, on the Sunshine Coast, I feel for the family of Balin Stewart.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I can hear the member for Logan interjecting. He might care to listen and hear about the experience of a family who lost a loved one at the hands of a young offender with a blade—the family of Balin Stewart. Sixteen-year-old Balin Stewart was fatally stabbed just over two years ago outside his family home in the Kawana electorate. Balin went to school in my electorate at Mountain Creek State High School. Balin's family and friends tried desperately to keep him alive, but Balin could not be saved. What happened to Balin is unthinkable. Unfortunately, it is sadly not an isolated case in Queensland. I would like to commend Balin's parents and his family and friends for setting up the Bin the Blade for Balin campaign. It encourages anyone who is carrying a knife to dispose of it before another person is hurt or killed and another family is torn apart.

Anything that we can do to remove knives from the street is welcomed. I was pleased to receive information from the Sunshine Coast police service informing me that 14 weapons had been located and seized over a three-month period during street checks under existing legislation. We should do more to provide police with the laws they need to keep us safe. Top Queensland police officers have said themselves that most knives on the street come from the home. Most people have a set of carving knives on the kitchen bench, so it is critical that we educate children on knife safety and provide police with the laws they need to keep our community safe.

We need consequences for the young people who arm themselves and, God forbid, when they use a weapon on someone. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the police for the hard work they do to keep Queenslanders safe. Unfortunately, it is a failing system. Queensland police officers do a stellar job, but they do not have the resources or the legislation to support them. What they have to deal with is the result of weakened laws under this tired third-term Labor government—

**Mr Krause** interjected.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I take the interjection from the member for Scenic Rim—that does not support police. The evidence shows they do not support police. The intent of this bill is a start, but what Queenslanders want and what Queenslanders need is tougher consequences. That means removing detention as a last resort from the Youth Justice Act. We need to open the doors to the Childrens Court for transparency and accountability. Too many lives have been lost to knife crime. Getting knives off the streets by stopping their sale to minors will make a small dent in knife possession, but these kids need to be educated that knives are not cool and they are not a fashion accessory. The small minority of violent kids who cannot be taught that need to be held to account and made to feel the full force of the consequences of their actions. Right now, they are not.

The first step is for Labor to support the LNP's amendment to remove detention as a last resort from the Youth Justice Act so that young offenders who want to do the wrong thing, who flaunt the law, who through their actions deliberately rub the noses of police in their lack of power, are held to account. Remove detention as a last resort. Support our amendments and remember that getting tough on small business is not the same as getting tough on youth crime. I call on those opposite to support the LNP's amendments and to get tough on those who do the wrong thing.